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**TOMORROW**



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# Welsh MP wants to stop Essex travellers' eviction

■ Bid to overturn Basildon Council plan to close camp  
■ But John Baron says the 'law must be upheld'

By JON AUSTIN  
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AN MP from Wales is fighting to get the Government to stop Basildon Council evicting hundreds of travellers illegally living at Dale Farm, Crays Hill, and Hovefields, Wickford.

Labour MP Julie Morgan, who represents Cardiff North, is tabling a petition to the House of Commons, calling on Communities Secretary John Denham to issue an "emergency directive" stopping the council ousting 100 families.

The petition is on behalf of the all-party parliamentary group on Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform, which believes alternative homes must be found before any eviction notice is served.

However, Billericay MP John Baron, whose constituency includes both sites and most of the district's 120 legal traveller pitches, disagrees.

He said: "Julie Morgan and I have crossed swords before over this issue.

"Her line is that, despite this being an illegal site, the travellers should be allowed to stay. This is wrong. The law must be upheld."

He suggested Mrs Morgan should instead be pressing the



■ Julie Morgan – has tabled a petition on behalf of travellers

Government to find an alternative site, on surplus land it owns, outside the district.

Len Gridley, 50, whose Oak Road home borders Dale Farm, said: "If Mrs Morgan can confirm her constituency will develop a traveller site big enough for everyone at Dale Farm, then I am sure the council will halt the eviction while they move there."

"We will see if her constituents think her for it."

The petition claimed the council is breaking planning legislation and the 2004 Housing Act by not preparing a strategy to meet housing needs of gypsies and travellers.

It said: "This mass eviction will be carried out by a firm of bailiffs whose brutality was condemned by the High Court."

It asked Mr Denham to use powers to ensure the council finds pitches for all travellers living in the boundary before evicting them.

There are no traveller sites in Cardiff North. But Mrs Morgan



■ Controversial – an aerial view of the Dale Farm site in Crays Hill

said there are two in neighbouring Cardiff South. She also confirmed there were no plans for any more sites in Cardiff.

She added: "I am presenting the petition in my capacity as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform. I was asked to do so on behalf of the families. It is their petition, not mine."

**‘This mass eviction will be carried out by a firm of bailiffs whose brutality was condemned by the High Court’**

## Retired teacher behind petition

A RETIRED secondary school teacher is the latest ally in the Dale Farm travellers' bid to remain at their illegal camp.

Ann Dean, a pensioner, from Brighton, drafted the petition put forward by MP Julie Morgan.

She is also currently drafting six new planning applications for the most needy families to remain at Dale Farm and a complaint to the local Government Ombudsman about Basildon Council's hiring of bailiffs, Constant & Co.

She has had a number of successes for travellers to remain on illegally-built sites around the country, since she began fighting their corner in the Nineties.

She said: "The council plans to spend about £2million on the eviction. There will be further costs because there will be more legal challenges, which it is likely to lose once it issues the 28-day eviction notices. It is a terrible waste of money."

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